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ABSTRACT

This final report summarizes the objectives, activities and outcomes of a federally-funded project designed to improve the quality of graduate-level preservice training for personnel who serve children with disabilities aged birth through 5. Among other things, the project developed a Master of Education Program in Early Intervention (birth to age 5). The program consisted of three components: (1) the Early Intervention M.Ed. Core; (2) Additional Coursework for the Early Childhood Education Certificate; and (3) Additional Coursework for the Special Education Certificate. The project was also designed to incorporate two certification options within this Early Intervention Program focusing on: (1) Early Childhood Education; and (2) Special Education. A total of 17 students were supported by the grant, 12% of whom were from underrepresented groups. Fifteen of these students completed their graduate work and 14 went on to work with students with disabilities in either early intervention or school-aged programs after graduation. Processes were developed through which faculty from multiple disciplines designed and regularly reviewed interdisciplinary coursework. Six video-based assignments for two methods courses were designed by a six-member interdisciplinary committee to assist with more authentic competency acquisition. Additionally, students were asked to compile comprehensive portfolios to demonstrate their competency at the end of the program, which proved to be a successful alternative to taking comprehensive examinations. (SG)

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ED 462 804

Final Report

Component 3:
Early Intervention / Preschool
September, 1996 – August, 2000

Grant # HO29G60161

Project Director: Louise A. Kaczmarek, Ph.D.
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Table of Contents

Abstract 3

Objective 1 4

Objective 2 6

Objective 3 7

Objective 4 8

Component 3: Early Intervention / Preschool
Abstract

The purpose of this project is to improve the quality of graduate-level preservice training for personnel who serve children birth through age 5 with disabilities. Current trends in service delivery require early interventionists to possess considerable integrative expertise to encompass the complex functions needed to work with young children with disabilities and their families. Early Intervention personnel preparation programs that have a substantial interdisciplinary component assist in preparing personnel that are ready to meet these challenges.

Preschool and Infant/Toddler Programs for children with disabilities are either required or prefer to hire persons with an Early Childhood Education Certificate or a Special Education Certificate. However, persons who acquire these certificates from training programs in the State of Pennsylvania usually have not received specific training to serve infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with disabilities. Consequently, most personnel hired in early intervention programs (birth to age 5) must learn the role of the early childhood special educator / early interventionist on the job. This results in inadequate service delivery for children and families, poor job satisfaction for personnel, and burdens on the provider agencies to provide training that goes well beyond the scope of their mission.

In order to meet these needs, this project is designed to address the following objectives:
1. To develop a Master of Education Program in Early Intervention (Birth to age 5) which has two certification options - one in Early Childhood Education, a second in Special Education.
2. To graduate 16 personnel with an M.Ed. in Early Intervention and a certificate in either special education or early childhood education.
3. To establish a process through which faculty from multiple disciplines design and regularly review interdisciplinary coursework.
4. To develop more authentic competency acquisition and evaluation activities in the two early intervention methods courses.

The program consists of 3 components (i.e., the Early Intervention M.Ed. Core; Additional Coursework for the Early Childhood Education Certificate, and Additional Coursework for the Special Education Certificate) with additional intersections with other disciplines (i.e., Early Childhood Education, Communication Disorders, Vision Studies). The majority of the coursework in the Early Intervention Core is interdisciplinary, that is, courses have been designed, revised, or are slated for revision by faculty from a variety of disciplines. The Early Intervention Core courses offer several exemplary features: (1) a common core of coursework with the Early Childhood Education Program; (2) an interdisciplinary course on early childhood inclusion developed through community partnerships in which 4 inclusionary models are simulated; (3) participation in a seminar offered as part of the University's UCLID Center that brings together faculty and students from more than 6 schools and over 15 disciplines and specializations concerned with children who have neurodevelopmental disabilities.

The project also will develop more authentic competency acquisition and evaluation activities, to include (1) more realistic case study and video-based evaluation activities and (2) portfolio assessment. An interdisciplinary team of community partners, including parents, will assist in developing the former.

Component 3:
Early Intervention / Preschool

Objective 1. To develop a Master of Education Program in Early Intervention (Birth to age 5) which has two certification options - one in Early Childhood Education, a second in Special Education.

There were a few changed in the Early Intervention, Early Childhood, and Special Education Programs that warranted changes in our originally prepared programs. The Early Intervention program remained essentially the same as originally proposed with the following exceptions. Instead of 2 age related methods courses (one devoted to infants/toddlers and a second devoted to preschoolers), we revised the program to include one methods course that focused on assessment and a second on programming. This was due to too much overlap between courses when they were divided by age level. In other words, we found we could cover considerably more content and in greater depth when the courses were divided by function. The only other change was to reduce the UCLID seminar to one term rather than 2. The content of the second term UCLID seminar focused primarily on leadership skills that were geared to advanced Master's and doctoral level students and were well beyond the skills required or even desired for our entry level M.Ed. students.

There were 2 major changes in the Early Childhood Program that affected students who were doing a dual M.Ed. and ECE certificate. We initiated a methods course devoted entirely to reading at the primary level, which was taught by the Reading/Language Arts faculty and eliminated the course called Primary Methods 1, which focused on reading and social science. We added a course on Arts in ECE to replace the summer elective. The M.Ed. – ECE Certificate program as amended can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Sample Plan of Study
Early Intervention M.Ed. / Early Childhood Education Certificate
(57 Credits)

First Fall (15 cr)		
I&L 2904	Teaching Preschoolers	3 cr
I&L 2560	Early Education Children with Disabilities	3 cr
I&L 2562	Early Intervention Assessment	3 cr
I&L 2515	Medical Conditions	3 cr
I&L 2594	UCLID Seminar	2 cr
I&L 2850	Practicum: Preschool	1 cr
First Spring (13 cr)		
I&L 2905	Teaching Infants/Toddlers	2 cr
I&L 2561	Programming in Early Intervention	3 cr
I&L 2582	Parent-Professional Partnerships	3 cr
I&L 2850	Preschool Practicum with Seminar	1 cr
I&L 2852	Infant/Toddler Practicum with Seminar	1 cr
Educ 2200	Research Methods	3 cr
Summer 1 (2 cr)		
I&L 2563	Simulation Seminar: Inclusion in Early Childhood	2 cr
Second Fall (13 cr)		
Educ 2100	Education & Society	3 cr
Educ 2000	Psych of Learning and Development	3 cr
I&L 2206	Reading / Language Arts – Primary	3 cr
I&L 2906	Community Resources – Young Children & Families	2 cr
I&L 2869	Pre-student Teaching Field Experience	1 cr
I&L 2852	Infant /Toddler Practicum with Seminar	1 cr
Second Spring (14 cr)		
I&L 2903	Teaching Primary Aged Children 2	3 cr
I&L 2800	Student Teaching	4 cr
I&L 2707	Field Seminar	1 cr
I&L 3509	Adv Seminar Early Intervention	3 cr
I&L 2911	Arts in Early Childhood	3 cr

Changes in the Special Education curriculum included the addition of a course on children with emotional challenges, a prerequisite in reading, and a practicum focusing on collaboration with general education. The integrated methods seminar was eliminated. The program as amended for full time students can be found in Table 2.

Table 2.
Sample Plan of Study
Early Intervention M.Ed. / Special Education Certificate
(65 credits)

First Fall (15 cr)			
I&L	2904	Teaching Preschoolers	3 cr
I&L	2560	Early Education Children with Disabilities	3 cr
I&L	2562	Preschool Assessment & Early Intervention	3 cr
I&L	2515	Medical & Physical Aspects of Disability	3 cr
I&L	2594	UCLID Seminar	2 cr
I&L	2850	Practicum: Preschool with Seminar	1 cr
First Spring (13 cr)			
I&L	2905	Teaching Infants/Toddlers	2 cr
I&L	2561	Infant/Toddler Assessment & Early Intervention	3 cr
I&L	2582	Parent-Professional Partnerships	3 cr
I&L	2850	Preschool Practicum with Seminar	1 cr
I&L	2852	Infant/Toddler Practicum with Seminar	1 cr
Educ	2200	Research Methods	3 cr
First Summer (9 cr)			
I&L	xxxx	Reading Methods course (prerequisite)	3 cr.
I&L	2500	Foundations of Special Education (prerequisite0	3 cr.
I&L	2509	Classroom & Behavior Management	3 cr
Second Fall (15 cr)			
Educ	2100	Education and Society	3 cr
I&L	2852	Infant /Toddler Practicum with Seminar	1 cr
I&L	2513	Curriculum/Program Development: Mild Disabilities	3 cr
I&L	2906	Community Resources: Young Children & Families	2 cr
I&L	2506	Children with Emotional Disabilities	3 cr
Educ	2000	Psych of Learning and Development	3 cr
Second Spring (13 cr)			
I&L	3509	Adv. Seminar: Early Intervention	3 cr
I&L	2512	Assessment/Instruction: Mild Disabilities	3 cr
I&L	2853	Practicum - Mild Disabilities with Seminar	2 cr
I&L	2855	Practicum – Collaboration with Seminar	2 cr
I&L	2517	Collaboration/Consultation in General Education	3 cr
Summer Session 1 (3 credits)			
I&L	2755	Advanced Seminar in Professional Issues	2 cr
I&L	2050	Computer Applications in Education	1 cr

Objective 2. To graduate 16 personnel with a M.Ed. in Early Intervention and a certificate in either special education or early childhood education.

The grant supported a total of 17 students, 12% of whom were from underrepresented groups. Two students received a M.Ed. in Early Intervention and a certificate in Early Childhood Education, seven students received a M.Ed. in Early Intervention and a certificate in Special Education, six students received an M.Ed. in Early Intervention only, and 2 students did not finish

the program. Of the six who received a M.Ed. only, 3 were already certified in either special education or early childhood education when they entered the program. The remaining 3 for personal reasons changed their minds about the certificate and pursued only the M.Ed. degree. Of the two who did not finish, one was unable to arrange her schedule to complete the practicum requirements, although she completed most of the coursework. The other student simply dropped out without explanation. Of the 15 students who completed their graduate work, 14 were working with students with disabilities in either early intervention (9 graduates) or school-aged programs (6 graduates) after they graduated. One of the students who received an ECE certificate got a job in a primary grade. Of these 15 students, 11 found new positions and 4 remained in current positions.

Objective 3. To establish a process through which faculty from multiple disciplines design and regularly review interdisciplinary coursework.

In our proposal we identified a number of interdisciplinary collaborations. The status of each will be reviewed here. The **Early Childhood** and Early Intervention faculty met twice a month throughout the duration of the project. Joint coursework was reviewed annually to make sure that the courses were meeting needs of students in both programs.

As reported in our annual reports, collaborations between **Occupational Therapy** and Early Intervention did not come to fruition as expected, because the Chair of the OT Department resigned unexpectedly and it took 3 years before a permanent chair was found for that Department.

Collaborations with **Communication Disorders** have continued at the level as expected in the original proposal. Communication Disorders still regularly take the Inclusion Seminar as an Education course. We did not cross-listed in Communication Disorders as originally expected because students in the CD program are required to take education courses. For many, the inclusion seminar is a very practical course for those intending to work with preschool children. In particular, the course covers IEPs and collaboration across disciplines, which are not strongly stressed in the current CD program.

Collaborations with the **UCLID Center** continue to be close and especially rewarding. Each year the Fall UCLID Leadership seminar is reviewed by the 12 disciplines that participate in its implementation. Changes are made to the curriculum as appropriate on an annual basis.

The formal interface between the **Special Education** and Early Intervention programs was established with the implementation of this grant. Each year the coordinators of these two programs get together to review the structure of the joint program, making amendments as necessary. The faculty in the Special Education program consider the joint Early Intervention-Special Education students to be among the most talented in the program.

Finally, **Vision Studies** students throughout the duration of this grant were involved in the Inclusion Seminar as part of their program. As with the Communication Disorders students, the interface with other disciplines in the course was found to be particularly useful in the development of their competence as educators.

Objective 4. To develop more authentic competency acquisition and evaluation activities in the two early intervention methods courses.

Our focus in this objective was two fold: (1) to develop video-based assignments for our two methods courses; (2) to use portfolios in place of our comprehensive examination.

In developing more authentic competency assignments for the two methods courses, we established a Community Review Committee (CRC) of 6 members, a preschool classroom teacher, a infant/toddler home-based provider, an infant/toddler classroom provider, a speech-language pathologist, an occupational therapist, and a parent of a preschooler with disability. The CRC met several times in Fall, 1997. After reviewing the program and in particular the methods courses, we engaged them in helping us design 6 different video-based assignments, three for each methods course. A video-based assignment is one in which each student is given a videotape to take home containing segments of children, some in interaction with family members or professionals, and a set of written tasks focused on the videotape. In the assessment course, two assignments focused on development, using Transdisciplinary Play-Based Assessment. In both assignments, one

focusing on motor development and the second on cognitive development, the videotape contained segments of the same child at different ages and students were asked to apply the TPBA guidelines in writing an assessment report. In addition, each of these assignments also contained segments of a child with a disability in which students applied the same guidelines. A third assignment for that class consisted of a child being administered an assessment battery. Students were asked to review and evaluate the assessors' interactions with the mother during the assessment in accordance with a set of guidelines developed by our state EI agency. In the Programming class, three assignments were constructed. They focused on teaching techniques, environmental adaptations, and a comprehensive application of course content to a child across the home, early intervention, and day care settings.

To replace our comprehensive examinationportfolio, students are asked to assemble artifacts that demonstrated their competence in Interactions with Children (specifically assessment, planning, intervention), Interactions with Families, and Interactions with Other Professionals. In addition, they are required to write an essay discussing their competence in each of these areas plus an overview statement. Following the completion of the portfolio, a student distributes copies of their portfolio to a committee consisting of the EI Program Coordinator, the Practicum Supervisor, and a member from the community who has played a role in their professional development. The committee meets with the student to assess them. Following a brief presentation by the student, committee members ask students questions about their preparation and early intervention in an oral examination. Afterwards the committee determines if the student has passed the examination. Overall, the portfolio has proven to be a very successful alternative to the comprehensive exam by both students and faculty.

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